

Cut out sugary drinks to prevent type 2 diabetes, study finds

July 7 2017



Credit: Dean Hochman

An international study led by ANU has bolstered the global campaign for a sugar tax, finding thousands of cases of type 2 diabetes could be prevented every year in Thailand if people stopped drinking sugary drinks every day.

The results come from the Thai Cohort Study from 2005 to 2013, which

involved a nation-wide sample of nearly 40,000 adults.

The research team used a new statistical technique called mediation analysis to find that as [sugary drinks](#) consumption increased the risk of type 2 diabetes also increased, independently of obesity and weight gain.

Lead author Keren Papier from ANU said type 2 diabetes killed millions of people globally every year and evidence from around the world showed that a reduction in sugary drink consumption would reduce rates of type 2 diabetes.

"A reduction in [sugary drink consumption](#) is likely reduce rates of diabetes in Australia," said Ms Papier, a PhD candidate from the ANU Research School of Population Health.

"Several countries including Mexico, the United States, France and Chile have already started acting on sugary drinks by imposing or committing to a sugar tax.

"Findings from the United States and Mexico show that applying the tax has led to a 17 and 21 per cent decrease respectively in the purchase of taxed beverages among low-income households."

The tax has raised over \$US2.6 billion in Mexico.

"Sugary drinks are an ideal target for public health interventions to help control the type 2 diabetes epidemic since they have no nutritional value and do not protect against disease," Ms Papier said.

"Over 4,000 cases of type 2 diabetes could be prevented annually in the Thai population if people avoided [drinking](#) sugary drinks daily. Thai women, who are at double the risk of type 2 diabetes from drinking sugary drinks, would be the main beneficiaries."

Between 1983 and 2009, the average Thai person's sugar intake jumped from 13kg to 31kg in a year.

Ms Papier said research in several rich countries had shown that women globally were at higher risk of type 2 [diabetes](#) from drinking soft drinks.

"Women are more susceptible because they generally have lower muscle mass and energy needs compared with men," she said.

ANU conducted the study with QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute and the Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University in Thailand.

It is part of a larger study of the health-risk transition to chronic disease underway in middle-income countries and the information from Thailand is leading to a better understanding of multi-level forces driving the process worldwide.

The research is published in *Nutrition & Diabetes*.

Provided by Australian National University

Citation: Cut out sugary drinks to prevent type 2 diabetes, study finds (2017, July 7) retrieved 8 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-07-sugary-diabetes.html>

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